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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 001352

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: MEDIA BRIEFING ON NATIONAL CONVENTION PLANS

REF: A. RANGOON 1345 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. RANGOON 1332

Classified By: Poloff Dean Tidwell for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (U) Following the Burmese government's briefing for diplomats on December 1 (ref A), the GOB held two briefings on December 3 for local and international media. The first briefing was conducted in Burmese and the second in English for foreign media, granted special journalist visas to cover the reconvening of the National Convention (NC).

[1](#)2. (U) In response to media questions, Attorney-General U Aye Maung, chair of the NC Working Committee, confirmed that the NC process would not conclude before the end of 2006. In an unusual step, Minister of Information Kyaw Hsan, the Secretary of the NC, confirmed recent reports that the house

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arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) had been extended on November 27 by six months (ref B). He stressed that "Burma is not a threat to regional security," and denied charges that Burma is developing a nuclear program, in a reference to recent discussions at the UNSC.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT: Foreign journalists rarely receive visas, and this briefing, following the press briefing on the move of the capital last month, constitutes a stepped up public diplomacy effort by the very closed regime. The media briefing went over familiar ground about the NC, but answered two important questions: how long the constitutional process in Burma would drag on (at least another year) and the status of ASSK. The GOB no longer claims that ASSK is held in "protective custody," but acknowledges that it is keeping her under house arrest. The recent UNSC debate and increased international criticism of Burma has struck a nerve, compelling the regime to provide some explanation of its increasingly irrational behavior. End Comment.

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